

MS4 fact sheet - Reducing Pet Waste

Image Courtesy of Emmons & Olivier Resources, Inc.



Dog waste sign

Pet waste left uncollected is unsanitary and disagreeable for users. It contains pathogenic bacteria and other parasites. When pet waste is washed into our lakes and rivers it decays in the water, depleting oxygen levels and releasing ammonia, which can be harmful to fish and other aquatic organisms. Pet waste also contains nutrients that foster weed and algae growth. Elevated bacteria levels in lakes and rivers caused by *Escherichia coli* (*E. coli*) can cause unsafe conditions for swimming and recreational activities.

This fact sheet provides guidance on developing a community pet waste management program.

Benefits and pollution reduction

Pet waste management results in cleaner parks and neighborhoods, with improved aesthetics and lowered potential for diseases to spread. Reducing the amount of uncollected pet waste reduces a significant cause of stormwater pollution.

Program development and implementation

Programs designed to combat poor management of pet waste fall into three broad categories. Municipalities often create programs that overlap these categories for optimal results.

Awareness campaigns (pet owner-based)

Programs are designed to overcome educational barriers. Owners are educated about the health risks and natural resource impacts associated with not cleaning up their animal's waste and are informed of their responsibility for finding suitable methods to pick up after their pet. The [City of Minneapolis](#) has implemented the "Canines for Clean Water" awareness campaign. Throughout the summer, the city sponsors dog oriented activities and education about keeping their waterways clean.

- *Brochures/fact sheets* Informational sheets are mass-mailed to educate residents of the health risks, natural resource impacts and applicable ordinances/fines. The brochure should also outline the proper handling and disposal of pet waste. Brochures could be provided at public kiosks or city offices, attached to park signage (see image above) as well as displayed at pet supply outlets and veterinarian offices.
- *Park signage* Located at park entrances to alert residents of the proper disposal techniques and/or park design features for pet droppings.

Pet waste control ordinances (management-based)

A municipality may introduce a law that requires pet owners to pick up after their pets or risk receiving a fine.